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FM AMEMBASSY KAMPALA
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INFO RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0689
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUEHTO/AMEMBASSY MAPUTO 0475
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 3425
RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KAMPALA 000235

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO USAID AND OFDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PREF ASEC EAID UG SU CG

SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA NOTES (January 1-31, 2008)

¶1. (U) Summary: The following Northern Uganda Notes provide information on the situation on the ground and USG activities aimed at meeting Mission objectives in northern Uganda. These objectives include promoting regional stability through peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. Post appreciates feedback from consumers on the utility of this product and any gaps in information that need to be filled. End Summary.

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES
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¶2. (U) The talks resumed on January 30, with the U.S. and European Union named as official observers. The Government of Uganda and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) signed an extension of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CHA) until February 29. The parties also agreed to a timetable to accelerate the talks.

¶3. (SBU) LRA leader Joseph Kony reshuffled his delegation on January 23. He had met with the delegation near Rikwangba on January 22. After the group returned to Juba, Kony then announced via teleconference that he dropped several members of his negotiating team, including the head of delegation, Martin Ojul, on January 23. The new LRA delegation consists of: Dr. David Matsanga (head), James Obita (deputy), Willy Oryem, Anyena Odongo (legal advisor), Yusef Adek, Justine Labeja, Santa Okot, and Peter Ongom. Seven other members from the diaspora and within northern Uganda also were named. In November, Kony had become concerned about Ojul because the LRA leader believed that Ojul was funneling peace process funds to his cousin, LRA deputy Vincent Otti. Kony cited "profiteering" as the reason for Ojul's dismissal and accused him of accepting USD 200,000 from the Government of Uganda.

¶4. (SBU) Press reports describe Matsanga as a hard-line member of the diaspora. He hails from eastern, not northern, Uganda. He was a member of the Uganda People's Congress party and fled Uganda in 1985. He attempted to overthrow former President Milton Obote from the UPC party's leadership in 2005. He used his World Media Limited organization to defend Zimbabwean President Mugabe and brought Britain's Sky Television into the LRA camp in September 2006. In the past, he was critical of GOSS mediator Riek Machar and pushed for the re-location of the talks.

¶5. (U) U.N. Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Joachim Chissano visited Kampala from January 24-26 to meet with President Museveni. He met with the LRA delegation in Nairobi on January 28.

¶6. (U) On January 21, LRA defectors Sunday Otto and Richard Odong-kau received re-affirmation of their amnesty. Amnesty

Commissioner Justice Onenga explained that there were exceptional circumstances involved in their cases and that their previously granted amnesty was re-instated. Vincent Okema, Ojok Alex, and Okello Opio received their amnesty certificates. The Amnesty Commission was unable to provide their amnesty packages due to a lack of funds.

¶17. (U) USG Activities: P/E Chief briefed Kenny Fenechek of Resolve Uganda, on January 3 and Julia Spiegel of ENOUGH on January 24 on current status and dynamics of the peace talks. P/E Chief and PAO met with student groups from the University of Virginia's Human Rights Law Project and the University of Pennsylvania's Law School on January 2 and 7.

¶18. (U) Senior Advisor for Conflict Resolution Tim Shortley met with Ugandan government officials, European partners, and Chissano during a visit to Kampala from January 24-27. He traveled to Juba to participate in the resumption of the peace talks on January 30 in Juba. Uganda Desk Officer Bisola Ojikutu visited Uganda from January 28 to February 5.

¶19. (U) Business Executives for National Security, a group of private U.S. business owners, traveled to Gulu on January 23 to assess the security and humanitarian situation. The group also met with Ugandan Government officials and businessmen in Kampala.

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HUMANITARIAN AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY
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¶10. (U) Freedom of movement and forced evictions have become the top protection issue in the Acholi sub-region. There was growing pressure from landowners and Government for the displaced population

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(IDPs) to return home. The issue was highlighted during a series of workshops and community meetings in Acholi sub-region in January. A key conclusion was that balanced camp closure procedures were urgently needed to handle a multitude of issues related to returns, camp closure, and transformation of camps into viable communities. Members of the humanitarian community noted that these procedures should consider options for populations that would stay in the camps/trading centers for economic opportunities or because they are unable to move. Another component of the issue is how to normalize these areas, including transitioning to renting or leasing land.

¶11. (U) In the short-term, it would be important to consider the coping mechanisms many households were employing by keeping one foot in the camp and one foot in the return area. In the absence of a final peace agreement, large segments of the population remain apprehensive that the relatively secure environment of the past two years would not hold. Recent radio broadcasts by Museveni, setting deadlines for the LRA, and Kony's public remarks that it was not safe to go home, have added to the level of concern among IDPs.

¶12. (U) Returns across the Acholi sub-region continue at a relatively slow pace. In addition to lack of a peace deal, IDPs cite the lack of building materials, clean water, education, healthcare and roads as impediments to return. There was widespread bush burning in order to clear fields and hunt, that has limited the amount of grass available for thatching material. The burning was largely uncontrolled and had become a public hazard. In some cases, private property was destroyed. Local leaders have begun community outreach and radio announcements to address the issue. In the short term, bush burning does reduce labor required to clear fields, a priority for most households.

¶13. (U) USG Activities: USAID held a meeting of its northern Uganda partners in Gulu, January 24. A key concern was growing tensions between local government and NGOs. Tensions are particularly high in Gulu District, where Government representatives frequently broadcast complaints about NGOs over the radio. There are many NGOs that do not coordinate with local Government, operate without Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), or have poor performance record. Local governments would like to increase their coordination and oversight of activities in their districts. However, they have

a limited capacity to do so, poor internal communication between line ministries and political leadership in Kampala, and no consistent policies on MOUs. USAID's partners have sought support to help standardize MOUs and coordination procedures with local governments and to help educate local officials on how donor funding works. USAID will be reaching out to northern leaders to discuss these issues and what steps might be taken.

¶14. (U) USAID launched three new conflict management and mitigation (CMM) programs for northern Uganda. Pader Peace-building with Mercy Corps, Internews training and program development with radio journalists, Civil Society participation in the Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) with CARE, and the new SPRING program that will work in three areas, peace building, livelihoods, and access to justice.

¶15. (U) A Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF HOA) Civil Affairs team conducted a month long Veterinary Civic Action Program (VETCAP) in Gulu and Amuru Districts during the month of January. The VETCAP assisted the Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Industry and Fisheries in completing a district wide surveillance, treatment and control program for Trypanosomiasis, tsetse fly and rabies. The project provided hands on training to Ugandan veterinarian students from Makerere University and local animal health care providers in designing a comprehensive district wide herd health program, tsetse fly control program, infectious disease diagnostic program and zoonotic disease control programs. Training on avian influenza was conducted and the proper method of inoculating for Newcastle Disease was demonstrated. The project also assisted the Ugandan government in providing healthy livestock to civilians relocating from IDP camps to their former villages. The seven person team from CJTF HOA, working with their Ugandan counterparts, treated over 30,000 animals at 42 different sites.

¶16. (U) The CJTF HOA Civil Affairs Team, based in Kitgum, continued construction of the Children's Ward for the District Referral Hospital and a library in Kitgum. The team continued to evaluate potential future projects as well as develop plans for drilling new boreholes and refurbishing broken boreholes.

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FROM THE MEDIA AND THE WEB

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¶17. (U) The Civil Society Organizations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) ran an announcement in the Saturday New Vision on January 25 calling for a speedy resumption of the peace talks at Juba, arguing that continued delay threatens to derail the process and prolong suffering in Northern Uganda.

¶18. (U) The Sunday Monitor on January 27 carried an editorial entitled "No So Innocent Bystanders to Juba Talks" by Adrian Bradbury and Peter Quaranto of GuluWalk and Resolve Uganda. Bradbury and Quaranto compare what they describe "as the international community's response or lack thereof surrounding the faltering Juba peace process. The diplomatic corps, hampered by fatigue and impatience, has adopted a wait-and-see approach as events unfold." The authors praise the role of Riek Machar, the Southern Sudanese mediator for keeping the process in motion despite domestic issues in Sudan and describe U.N. Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Joachim Chissano as a crucial intermediary, but state that "his position too remains only part-time."

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U.S. STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF TALKS

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¶19. (U) On January 29, the following U.S. Statement on the Resumption of the Peace Talks in Juba was released from the Department:

The United States welcomes the resumption of the peace talks in Juba, South Sudan, between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army aimed at ending the 22 year conflict.

Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer, has asked her Senior Advisor for Conflict Resolution, Tim Shortley, to be present in Juba on January 30 to work with the mediator and parties on moving the peace process forward. The United States supports the peace talks, and maintains that the process cannot be open-ended. We urge the parties to work expeditiously on an agreement mechanism on accountability and reconciliation.

The United States will work with the Government of Uganda and the international community to provide robust support for reconstruction and recovery efforts in Northern Uganda.

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